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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Neuberger
Application No. 09/912,446
Filed/Deposited: 26 July, 2001
Attorney Docket No. 782.1102

DECISION

This is a decision on the petition filed on 26 June, 2009, considered as a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 (no fee) requesting withdrawal of the holding of abandonment in the above-identified application.

The petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **DISMISSED**.

This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. §704.

Any further petition to revive must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled “Renewed Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment.” *In the alternative, Petitioner may properly file a petition to the Commissioner under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) requesting revival of an application abandoned due to unintentional delay.*

As to the Request to Withdraw
the Holding of Abandonment

Petitioners always are directed to the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) for guidance as to the proper showing and timeliness and showing requirements for relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects as follows:

Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the final Office action mailed on 9 July, 2008, with reply due absent extension of time on or before 9 October, 2008.

On 9 January, 2009, Petitioner filed an a request and fee for extension of time and after-final amendment, which the Examiner refused to enter and Petitioner—as one registered to practice before the Office—knew was not as of right and not a proper reply¹ if it did not *prima facie* place the application in condition for allowance, and on 24 February, 2009, the Examiner mailed an Advisory Action.

The application went abandoned by operation of law after midnight 9 January, 2009.

The Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 14 April, 2009.

On 6 May, 2009, Petitioner filed a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 and averred timely filing of a request for continued examination (RCE) and fee and a submission under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.114 in the form of an amendment on 9 January, 2009. However, Petitioner provided neither evidence of submission *via* Express Mail evidence, nor evidence of a date stamped receipt card or Electronic Acknowledgement Receipt for receipt by the Office of anything other than an “Amendment/Request for Reconsideration” and fee for an extension of time to make timely the after-final amendment. Moreover, Petitioner’s copy of the RCE was not supported by the required evidence, as set forth in the excerpt from with the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP 711.03(c)(I), below. The petition was dismissed on 26 May, 2009.

On 26 June, 2009, Petitioner re-advanced the petition, this time with a statement by the person averred to have signed and dated the certificate of mailing stamped on the face of the RCE—Nova Johns (Ms. Johns)—which RCE was averred to have been submitted only *via* U.S. Postal Service (USPS) first class mail pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.8 and not with the electronically filed amendment after final (alternatively, the submission under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.114). This averment by Ms. Johns was not set forth previously. Petitioner erroneously claimed the decision of 26 May, 2009, concluded that the petition “did not provide any supporting evidence”—what the decision stated was:

... Petitioner provided neither evidence of submission *via* Express Mail evidence, nor evidence of a date stamped receipt card or Electronic Acknowledgement Receipt for receipt by the Office of anything other than an “Amendment/Request for Reconsideration” and fee for an extension of time to make timely the after-final amendment. Moreover, Petitioner’s copy of the RCE was not supported by the required evidence, as set forth in the excerpt from with the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP 711.03(c)(I)

¹ A proper reply is an amendment *prima facie* placing the application in condition for allowance, a Notice of Appeal, or an RCE (with fee and submission under 37 C.F.R. §1.114). (See: MPEP §711.03(c).)

There is a difference between a lack of evidence and a lack of the proper and supporting evidence—and Petitioner’s election to confuse or otherwise mischaracterize the statement of the Office is unfortunate. With regard to the averment of Ms. Johns submitted by Petitioner, not only did Petitioner delay in its presentation, but Ms. Johns did not indicate therein that the item was placed into the USPS mailbox prior to the last collection of the day, which assertion is required to satisfy the mandate of the rule that “The person signing the certificate should have reasonable basis to expect that the correspondence would be mailed or transmitted on or before the date indicated.” (See: 37 C.F.R. §1.8(1)(ii).) If the deposit was not made before the last collection of the day on 9 January, 2009, the person signing the certificate had no reasonable basis to expect that the correspondence would in fact be mailed or transmitted on that day.

(Petitioner averred in the petition of 6 May, 2009, that “the Amendment filed on January 9, 2009, and received by the USPTO indicated on the first page that that a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) is submitted.” In fact, there was no evidence supporting that statement submitted with the Amendment when it was filed electronically on 9 January, 2009, because, as Petitioner acknowledged, the papers were submitted separately and by different forms of transmission—and Ms. Johns details in her statement submitted on 26 June, 2009, that such “is a practice that Ms. Afework uses on regular bases (sic).”

Rather than place all of the information into her petition at the outset and make a proper showing as set forth in the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP 711.03(c)(I), Petitioner instead seems to have chosen to release details piecemeal. As a result, questions remain as to whether the RCE and fee were in fact timely submitted—Petitioner’s documentation clearly evidences that they were not timely filed with the amendment after final. And the showing by Petitioner is that such is her express and consistent “practice use[d] on [a] regular bas[i]s.”

Petitioner’s burden is to make a showing pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 (with narrative and documentary support) consistent with the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP 711.03(c)(I), which provides in pertinent part:

37 C.F.R. §1.10(c) through §1.10(e) and §1.10(g) set forth procedures for petitioning the Director of the USPTO to accord a filing date to correspondence as of the date of deposit of the correspondence as “Express Mail.” A petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment relying upon a timely reply placed in “Express Mail” must include an appropriate petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.10(c), (d), (e), or (g) (see MPEP §513). When a paper is shown to have been mailed to the Office using the “Express Mail” procedures, the paper must be entered in PALM with the “Express Mail” date.

Similarly, applicants may establish that a reply was filed with a postcard receipt that properly identifies the reply and provides *prima facie* evidence that the reply was timely filed. See MPEP §503. For example, if the application has been held abandoned for failure to file a reply to a first Office action, and applicant has a postcard receipt showing that an amendment was timely filed in response to the Office action, then the holding of

abandonment should be withdrawn upon the filing of a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. When the reply is shown to have been timely filed based on a postcard receipt, the reply must be entered into PALM using the date of receipt of the reply as shown on the post card receipt.

Where a certificate of mailing under 37 C.F.R. §1.8, but not a postcard receipt, is relied upon in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment, see 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) and MPEP §512. As stated in 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b)(3) the statement that attests to the previous timely mailing or transmission of the correspondence must be on a personal knowledge basis, or to the satisfaction of the Director of the USPTO. If the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing is not made by the person who signed the Certificate of Mailing (i.e., there is no personal knowledge basis), then the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing should include evidence that supports the conclusion that the correspondence was actually mailed (e.g., copies of a mailing log establishing that correspondence was mailed for that application). When the correspondence is shown to have been timely filed based on a certificate of mailing, the correspondence is entered into PALM with the actual date of receipt (i.e., the date that the duplicate copy of the papers was filed with the statement under 37 C.F.R. §1.8).

37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) also permits applicant to notify the Office of a previous mailing or transmission of correspondence and submit a statement under 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b)(3) accompanied by a duplicate copy of the correspondence when a reasonable amount of time (e.g., more than one month) has elapsed from the time of mailing or transmitting of the correspondence. Applicant does not have to wait until the application becomes abandoned before notifying the Office of the previous mailing or transmission of the correspondence. Applicant should check the private Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system for the status of the correspondence before notifying the Office. See MPEP §512.²

As indicated above, Petitioner clearly failed to satisfy this burden.

Moreover, the showing of record continue to indicate that while Petitioner may have intended to file an RCE with her amendment on 9 January, 2009, she simply failed to do so. The statutory requirement of a timely reply is not satisfied by an intended action, but, rather, only by a completed action.

Petitioner failed to satisfy the requirements set forth in the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I), which is the requirement for relief pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

Petitioner's alternative is to properly file a petition to the Commissioner requesting revival of an application abandoned due to unintentional delay pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b).

² See: MPEP §711.03(c)(I)(B).

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 does not toll any periods that may be running any action by the Office and a petition seeking relief under the regulation must be filed within two (2) months of the act complained of (*see*: 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f)), and those registered to practice and all others who make representations before the Office are reminded to inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.³

The availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner on-demand information as to events/transactions in an application.

STATUTES, REGULATIONS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994). And the regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a Petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application.⁴⁵,

Moreover, the Office has set forth in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) the showing and timeliness requirements for a proper showing for relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 in these matters.

Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other

³ See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on Petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

⁴ See: Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁵ The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition. (Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.) Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable. Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a). And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter. Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care. (By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.)

means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.⁶

Allegations as to the Request to
Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

The guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) specifies the showing required and how and when it is to be made and supported.

Petitioner appears not to have made the showing required.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Should Petitioner wish to revive the application, Petitioner may wish to properly file a petition to the Commissioner requesting revival of an application abandoned due to unintentional delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). (See:

http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/documents/0700_711_03_c.htm#sect711.03c)

A petition to revive on the grounds of unintentional delay must be filed promptly and such petition must be accompanied by the reply, the petition fee, a statement that "the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition was unintentional" (the statement is in the form available online), and a terminal disclaimer and fee where appropriate.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

⁶ In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

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 Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214—it is noted, however, that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2⁷) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).



/John J. Gillon, Jr./
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⁷ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.